



Contact: Joette Storm 907-271-5296
or Dee Hanson, AAA, 907-245-1251

April 30, 2002

GENERAL AVIATION PILOTS GET NEW ROUTE TO RUSSIAN FAR EAST

ANCHORAGE, AK – The State Civil Aviation Authority of the Russian Federation (SCAA) in cooperation with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) will open a new Visual Flight Rule route to the Russian Far East allowing general aviation pilots to fly from Alaska to Provideniya Bay, Russia. Under an agreement with the SCAA, private pilots will be permitted to fly across the Bering Strait into Russian air space.

Three years in the development, the route is a joint product of cooperation between FAA, SCAA and the Alaska Airmen's Association. The new route is published in the Russian Aeronautical Information Publication (AIP) and will be noticed to the public by FAA this week.

Brian Staurseth, International Operations Specialist for FAA Flight Standards Division, noted that although routes between Russia and Alaska have existed since 1991, this is the first air route between the United States and Russia that provides a practical means for light general aviation aircraft to travel between the two countries.

Long time advocate of the route Alaska Airmen's Association President, Felix Maguire says, "The new route will bring general aviation into Russia, enable tourists to visit the Russian Far East, and provide an opportunity for increased economic benefits for both Alaska and Chukotka. It also removes the 'ice curtain' between the two countries that has separated native Alaskans from their cousin across the Bering Sea."

An Airmen's Association contingent successfully demonstrated the route on a flight to Provideniya last summer. "The route and communications demonstration was performed without flaw," according to Maguire.

The Russian Federation's vast territory covering 11 time zones is similar to Alaska, said Staurseth. "Since the collapse to the Soviet Union, small aircraft operations such as commuter operations have been curtailed or are nonexistent. An increase in general aviation would bring direct benefits from air transportation as well as secondary economic benefits from increased trade and tourism."

Pilots wishing to travel the new route must have a valid passport and apply for a letter of invitation from the government administration of Chukotka. They must also obtain a visa, flight permission from the State Civil Aviation Authority in Moscow and a waiver from the Transportation Security Administration (TSA).

Staurseth advises pilots to familiarize themselves with Russian aviation and travel regulations. A guide for pilots flying the route will be published on the FAA's Alaskan Region website and information will appear in the Alaska Supplement of the Airman Information Manual in the near future. The Alaska Airmen's Association has Russian VFR Charts in stock to go with a 'how to' booklet for GA pilots planning the trip.

###